

Message Text

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E.O.11652: N/A

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SUBJECT: CHANGES IN THE HAMBURG CITY-STATE CABINET

1. DESPITE HEADLINES IN THE LOCAL PRESS WHICH COULD LEAD ONE TO BELIEVE THAT IRREPARABLE FISSURES HAVE DEVELOPED WITHIN THE SPD MAJORITY PARTY OF THE SPD/FDP HAMBURG COALITION GOVERNMENT, THE ANNOUNCED RESIGNATION ON SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, OF SENATOR HELMUTH KERN OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMY AND TRANSPORTATION AND SENATOR WILHELM ECKSTROEM OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE ASSETS AND PUBLIC CORPORATIONS ARE ROUTINE DEVELOPMENTS WHICH, WE BELIEVE, WILL HAVE NO EFFECT ON THE STABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF BUEGERMEISTER HANS-ULRICH KLOSE. IN THE CASE OF KERN, HIS RESIGNATION HAS BEEN RUMORED FOR SEVERAL MONTHS NOW AND AFTER 10 YEARS AS HIS PARTY'S MOST POPULAR AND EFFECTIVE CABINET MEMBER, HE IS CLEARLY EXHAUSTED BY THE ROUGH AND TUBLE OF HAMBURG POLITICAL LIFE AND LOOKING FORWARD TO A LUCRATIVE NEW CAREER AS CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF THE STATE-OWNED HAMBURGER HAFEN-UND LAGERHAUSE-AKTIEN-

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GESELLSCHAFT. THE LATTER ORGANIRZATION IS ENGAGED IN

ALL PHASES OF HARBOR OPERATIONS.

2. "WUNDER WILLY" ACKSTROEM HAS NOT BEEN THE ASSET TO HIS PARTY THAT KERN HAS BEEN. ALTHOUGH AN EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATOR WHEN HE HEADED THE DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE FROM 1966 TO 1974, HIS FREQUENT GRATUITOUS AND OFTEN ADVERSE COMMENTS ABOUT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OTHER CITY-STATE DEPARTMENTS DID NOT WIN HIM MANY FRIENDS AMONG HIS SENATORIAL COLLEAGUES. INDEED, ECKSTROM'S MAVERICK WAYS SO EXACERBATED HIS RELATIONS WITH FORMER MAYOR PETER SCHULZ THAT THE LATTER OPPOSED ECKSTROM'S RENOMINATION AS A SENATOR DURING THE APRIL 1974 SPD HAMBURG PARTY CONVENTION. NEVERTHELESS, ECKSTROM HAD THE SUPPORT OF A MAJORITY OF THE DELEGATES AT THAT CONVENTION AND WAS REELECTED TO THE SENATE DESPITE THE OPPOSITION OF SCHULZ AND THE BOARD OF THE HAMBURG SPD. ECKSTROM WAS NO CLOSER TO MAYOR KLOSE AND HIS RESIGNATION WAS RECEIVED BY THE MAYOR WITH ALACRITY AND RELIEF.

3. BOTH RESIGNATIONS WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE APRIL 30, 1976. ON JANUARY 12 IT WAS ANNOUNCED BY THE RATHAUS THAT KLOSE, AFTER CONSULTING WITH THE SPD FRACTION IN THE STATE ASSEMBLY AND THE BOARD OF THE PARTY IN HAMBURG HAS SELECTED WILHELM NOELLING, THE INCUMBENT SENATOR FOR PUBLIC HEALTH, TO SUCCEED KERN AND MINISTERIAL-DIREKTOR HELGA ELSTNER OF THE FEDERAL DEPARTMENT FOR YOUTH, FAMILY AND HEALTH (BUNDESMINISTERIUM FUER JUGEND, FAMILIE UND GESUNDHEIT) IN BONN TO SUCCEED NOELLING AS SENATOR FOR PUBLIC HEALTH.

4. NOELLING, 42, A MEMBER OF THE CONSERVATIVE WING OF THE SPD, RECEIVED AN M.A. IN ECONOMICS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA IN 1964 AND IS ONE OF THE MOST RESPECTED YOUNG POLITICAL LEADERS IN THIS CITY.

5. STATE SECRETARY JUERGEN FRENZEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH, INFORMED US FOLLOWING THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE APPOINTMENT OF HELGA ELSTNER THAT SHE WAS APPROACHED SOME MONTHS AGO BY KLOSE AND OFFERED NOELLING'S HEALTH POST CONTINGENT THEN UPON NOELLING'S WILLINGNESS TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ACCEPT ANOTHER CABINET POSITION. FRAU ELSTNER BRINGS IMPRESSIVE CREDENTIALS TO HER NEW JOB. SHE HAS FOUR YEARS PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE AS THE HEAD OF THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF GERMAN HOUSEWIVES (DEUTSCHER HAUSFRAUENBUND), TEN YEARS EXPERIENCE AS MANAGING BOARD MEMBER OF THE WORKING GROUP OF GERMAN CONSUMER ORGANIZATIONS (ARBEITSGEMEINSCHAFT DER VERBRAUCHERVERBAENDE) AND AN 8-YEAR BACKGROUND WITH THE FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH, FAMILY AND

PUBLIC HEALTH IN BONN.

6. THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE ASSETS AND PUBLIC CORPORATIONS, A JERRY-BUILT BUREAUCRACY CREATED IN 1974 BY CONSOLIDATING SOME OF THE DUTIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE, WILL PROBABLY BE ABOLISHED AT THE TIME ECKSTROEM LEAVES OFFICE ON APRIL 30. ITS ACTIVITIES WILL, WE BELIEVE, BE DIVIDED AMONG THE OTHER CITY-STATE DEPARTMENTS. THIS WILL, THEREFORE, REDUCE THE NUMBER OF CABINET POSITIONS IN HAMBURG FROM 12 TO 11.

7. THUS FAR THE JUNIOR FDP PARTNER OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT HAS REFRAINED FROM EXPRESSING ITSELF PUBLICLY ABOUT THE KERN AND ECKSTROEM RESIGNATIONS AND WE DO NOT EXPECT ANY SIGNIFICANT REACTIONS FROM THE FDP ABOUT ITS CHANGES IN ITS SPD SENIOR PARTNER. DESCRIBING PRESS REACTIONS TO THE CABINET CHANGES AS "PROVOCATIVE", FDP SENATOR OF JUSTICE ULRICH KLUG HAS INFORMED US THE ENTIRE MATTER IS A "TEMPEST IN A TEAPOT" AND WE AGREE.

8. SOMEWHAT HOLLOWLY, JUERGEN ECKTERNACH, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE HAMBURG CDU, HAS, NOT SURPRISINGLY, TRIED TO MAKE THIS ALL OUT TO BE A SCHISMATIC BREAK IN SPD PARTY UNITY. ECKTERNACH HAS INFORMED THE PRESS THAT THIS SECOND CHANGE IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE HAMBURG SENAT SINCE ITS FORMATION IN APRIL 1974 - THE FIRST OCCURED WHEN IRRECONCILABLE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FORMER MAYOR SCHULZ AND A MAJORITY OF SPD CABINET MEMBERS OVER THE CITY BUDGET FORCED SCHULZ'S RESIGNATION AND HIS REPLACEMENT BY THE MORE CONSERVATIVE AND PRAGMATIC HANS - ULRICH KLOSE IN NOVEMBER 1974 - DEMONSTRATES A CHRONIC INSTABILITY WITHIN THE HAMBURG SPD. THIS, HOWEVER, IS AN OPINION WHICH IS NOT WIDELY SHARED BY SCKTERNACH'S CDU PARTY COLLEAGUES IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HAMBURG. ON THE CONTRARY, ALFRED DE CHAPEAUROUGE, CDU VICE PRESIDENT OF THE STATE ASSEMBLY, HAS ADMITTED TO US THAT THE SPD/FDP COALITION HERE IS THE STRONGER BECAUSE IT CAN REDUCE THE SIZE OF ITS CABINET BY ONE SPD POSITION AND DO IT SWIFTLY WITH THE FULL SUPPORT OF ITS TROUBLE-SOME AND LEFTIST-TINGED FDP JUNIOR PARTNER. ON BALANCE, WE SHARE THE GENERAL VIEWS EXPRESSED BY CHAPEAUROUGE AND KLUG THAT THESE CABINET CHANGES SHOULD NOT BE MISCONSTRUED AS A WEAKENING OF SPD PARTY UNITY IN HAMBURG BUT AS RECONSOLIDATION OF KLOSE'S PERSONAL POLITICAL STRENGTH AND INFLUENCE. BROGAN

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